

## Help for Depression

*It's just a phone call away.*

Someone who feels sad or blue and can't seem to throw off that feeling, or who can't work or says there is no point in living, probably suffers from depression. About 1.7 millions Americans agonize with this illness to varying degrees. Unfortunately, many turn to suicide to solve their ills.

But help is available, and now, it's as close as your phone. Federal Occupational Health now offers a free, confidential telephone screening to all employees covered by its EAP.

"Over the last six years, we have screened 200,000 people," said Dr. Douglas Jacobs, the Harvard psychiatrist who created the screening. "Seventy percent [of callers] were ill and needed treatment. I estimate that we have saved about 7,000 lives."

Screening was critical for Joan D., 50, a supervisor from Norcross, Ga. She suffered for almost 20 years, but never got help because she didn't know her symptoms were caused by depression. "I thought I had chronic fatigue syndrome. Some mornings, I couldn't get out of bed. Even the smallest things, like making phone calls, were sometimes insurmountable."

Then, Joan called the depression screening hotline. She shared her screening results with a healthcare professional who confirmed that she was severely depressed. Today, she is being

treated and is feeling much better.

"Depression is an illness, not a weakness," explains Dr. Jacobs. "We have the means to treat any kind of depression." But myths about the illness stop many people from getting help. "Many people feel they should be able to handle it on their own."

The benefits of a telephone screening are many, says Dr. Jacobs. A telephone screening may be more comfortable for someone who is too sad, scared or embarrassed to make a personal contact. Plus, the results of the screening are calculated immediately so callers don't have to wait for results.

Here's how the program works: Call the toll-free depression screening line — 1-800-698-8267 or 1-800-765-3277 for those requiring TTY services — any time day or night. A voice-activated answering machine asks the caller about 20 questions that can be answered using the number pads on a touch tone phone. A computer calculates the answers, then informs the caller of his/her results. Callers who may suffer from depression are encouraged to make an appointment with their Employee Assistance Program.

It's easy. It's confidential. It's free. If you or someone in your family seems to be struggling with depression, call the depression screening line today.

*Announcing . . .*

*A New Service from FOH*

### Telephone Screening for Depression or Alcohol Abuse

Employees covered by the Federal Occupational Health EAP can now obtain a free and confidential screening for depression or alcohol abuse from the privacy of their phone.

The service was developed by Harvard Medical School. It's based on the premise that not everyone may be comfortable talking to someone face-to-face about their feelings or problems. Based on the results of the telephone screening, callers may be referred to a medical professional for further evaluation.

Only a full medical evaluation can lead to a diagnosis, but a telephone screening can tell callers if their symptoms match the symptoms of people who've been diagnosed with either condition.

Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed because callers are never asked to identify themselves.

**For a depression or alcohol abuse screening, call  
1-800-698-8267**

**For TTY services, call  
1-800-765-3277**

- Free
- Anonymous
- Easy to use
- Immediate results
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

***“I was convinced I was ill, but I didn't know what to do. I began isolating myself. I stopped eating and was unable to sleep....The screening saved my life. I enjoy every day now.”***

Lisa F. of Pueblo West, Colo., describing how the telephone depression screening changed her life. The screening is now available to federal employees covered by the Federal Occupational Health EAP by calling 1-800-698-8267. For employees requiring TTY services, call 1-800-765-3277.

# Preventing Secondhand Alcohol Problems at Work

Most everyone is familiar with the dangers of secondhand smoke. Smokers risk not only their own health, but the health of those who come into contact with their smoke.

The same holds true for people who use alcohol. Research conducted in worksites across the country shows that people who drink sometimes make their co-worker's jobs more difficult, even if the drinking doesn't take place at work (for example, if the drinking occurs at lunch or if the person comes to work with a hangover). In one study, one in five workers said they had either been injured or put in danger, or had to re-do work, work harder or cover for a co-worker who had been drinking. One in three workers in *dangerous* jobs — jobs that involved operating heavy machinery or working with dangerous materials, for instance — said they, too, had been affected by a co-worker's drinking.

Everyone should be keenly aware of the dangers of working with an impaired co-worker, and everyone should actively take steps to ensure safe working conditions.

Secondhand alcohol problems at work can be prevented if all employees work together. Here are some things each employee can do:

**Learn about your agency's policies on alcohol.** Every federal agency has a policy on alcohol. That policy may prohibit alcohol use on during work hours or during lunches or breaks and may spell out the consequences of arriving at work under the influence.

**Don't contribute to the problem.** If you drink, follow federal guidelines for low-risk alcohol use. For men, the guidelines are no more than two standard drinks per day (a standard drink is either 12 ounces of 3% alcohol-content beer, 5 ounces of 12% alcohol-content wine or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits), and for women, no more than one standard drink per day. No one should drink if they're underage; pregnant, nursing or trying to conceive; driving or engaging in activities that require attention, judgment or skill; taking medication that interacts with alcohol; or recovering from alcohol or other drug dependence.

**When someone's drinking affects you, be assertive.** Don't cover up or do extra work for someone because s/he has been drinking. If you feel comfortable being direct, tell the person that s/he needs to take responsibility for drinking. Being assertive helps to ensure that the co-worker won't continue to take advantage of you.

**Talk to the EAP.** If being direct makes you uncomfortable, or if you suspect that a co-worker may have a problem with alcohol, talk to someone in the Employee Assistance Program. Some co-workers drink because they have become dependent on alcohol. The EAP can offer helpful advice on how to encourage a co-worker to get help.

*Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Addiction: New Perspectives for Worksite Alcohol Strategies, 1999.*

## Signs of Depression

- Do you have difficulty focusing on your work?
- Have you lost confidence in your ability to do your job?
- Do you find that you're irritable with co-workers?
- Have you lost interest in your work for no apparent reason?
- Are you too exhausted to get your work done or to get to work at all?

**For a depression screening, call  
1-800-698-8267**

**For TTY services, call  
1-800-765-3277**

## Signs of Alcohol Abuse

Alcohol abuse is defined as a pattern of drinking that is accompanied by one or more of the following situations within a 12-month period:

- Failure to fulfill major work, school or home responsibilities due to alcohol use
- Drinking in situations that are physically dangerous, such as while driving a car or operating machinery
- Recurring alcohol-related legal problems, such as being arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or for physically hurting someone while drunk
- Continued drinking despite having ongoing relationship problems that are caused or worsened by the effects of alcohol use

**For an alcohol abuse screening, call  
1-800-698-8267**

**For TTY services, call  
1-800-765-3277**



The Federal Consortium EAP provides assessment, counseling, referral, training and consultation to federal employees and agencies throughout the United States. For administrative details about the program, call Doug Mahy, Federal Occupational Health, at 214-767-3030. To visit us on the Web, go to [www.foh.dhhs.gov](http://www.foh.dhhs.gov).

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**Help available all day,  
all week, all year.**

**1 800 222 0364  
TTY: 1 888 262 7848**